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Responding to a widely expressed discontent about college teaching shared by students, faculty and administrators, representatives of national professional and higher educational associations formed a committee to study means of revitalizing and reorienting instruction. Each contributor in Volume III, selected for his outstanding teaching skills in the social sciences, examines current trends in teaching in his discipline, offers a critical review of the principal methods used, and provides pertinent bibliographical references. Russell M. Cooper's Introduction notes the impossibility of prescribing any single method of improving teaching and calls for reflection and self-criticism by the teacher. In "The Task of the Teacher in the Social Sciences", Kenneth Boulding stresses the sensitivity of the subject--an insight echoed in the other papers. Because the subject matter is so broad-- dealing with people's daily economic, political and social lives--it is controversial and the choice of topics or activities has strong ethical implications. Leonard J. Fine's "Teaching Political Science" also expresses the difficulty in sustaining the distinction between social science as a mode of analysis and as a way of life. Henry Cord Meyer, a historian, talks about the effect of recent social change on course content and students. In "The Teaching of Psychology" Robert B. MacLeod poses a series of questions on which he comments to the beginning teacher of psychology. (JS)

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THE QUEST FOR RELEVANCE

Effective College Teaching

VOLUME III

THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION March 1969

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

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THE QUEST FOR RELEVANCE

Effective College Teaching

FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME III

THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Prepared by the

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Washington, D. C.

March 1969

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PREFACE

This volume grows out of a deepening concern of leaders among national professional societies and members of the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) for improving quality and increasing relevance in college teaching. Responding to a widely expressed discontent among students and unease within the teaching profession, the AAHE assumed responsibility for calling together representatives from professional organizations to discuss the means of revitalizing and reorienting instruction in colleges and universities.

These representatives, under the chairmanship of Russell M. Cooper, Dean of Liberal Arts, University of South Florida, formed the Joint Committee on College Teaching (JCOT). The committee has included representatives from the following professional associations:

American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association for Higher Education
American Association of Junior Colleges
American Chemical Society
American Council on Education
American Council of Learned Societies
American Economic Association
American Historical Association
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Institute of Physics
American Political Science Association
American Psychological Association
College English Association
Conference Board of the Mathematical Sciences
Modern Language Association of America
U. S. Office of Education

The Advisory Committee for the study, listed below, was drawn largely from representatives of that group of organizations.

The completion of the book envisioned by the Joint Committee on Teaching has been made possible by a grant from the U. S. Office of Education with the AAHE serving as administrative and fiscal agent.

The contributors to this book were selected because of their vivid conceptions and demonstrable skills in teaching. Collectively, they do not offer a comprehensive representation of all disciplines. In fact, as originally divergent views on the rationale and scope of the book coalesced into a consensus, a clearly interdisciplinary overtone developed despite a format suggesting otherwise.

This work is divided into four volumes, but all volumes use the same preface, introduction, and general bibliography. The first three examine college teaching as perceived by some outstanding teachers representing the humanities (Volume I), the sciences (Volume II), and the social sciences (Volume III). In each volume an outstanding teacher discusses an entire area of study. Additional teachers of note, with full freedom to take an interdisciplinary stance, discuss the area with particular reference to their own disciplines. Each contributor to the first three volumes was asked to examine current trends in teaching in his area or discipline, to offer a critical review of the principal methods in use, and to provide pertinent bibliographical references.

The fourth volume treats, first, of matters of instruction which may be regarded as characteristic of effective teaching in all disciplines, with special attention to modern teaching aids (increasingly regarded not as incidental adjuncts but as essential to optimal learning), and the evaluative aspects of the teaching-learning process. This volume treats, second, of matters pertaining to the place of the teacher in his university and his community and of his responsibilities to them. It discusses the manner in which universities are organized administratively and in general terms discusses the regulations, communications and practices which are found on campus.

This book is intended for independent reading and as a basis for seminar and workshop discussion. Selected bibliographies are provided to encourage further exploration of knowledge of the art and craft of teaching. The book is designed not merely to communicate the personal experience of the authors but also to reflect the range of research and literature on college teaching.

Improving college teaching is certainly not a neglected subject. A long list of publications could be given, and many are included in the bibliography. The AHE (now AAHE) itself published "New Perspectives on Teaching the Disciplines," in Current Issues of Higher Education, 1962. It contains papers presented at AAHE's 17th National Conference on the teaching of the social sciences, geography, English, fine arts, and other subjects. Other publications that might be mentioned include these:

Wilbert McKeachie's Teaching Tips is a guidebook for the beginning college teacher (George Wahr Publishing Co. 1965).

Improving College and University Teaching, the quarterly edited by Delmer M. Goode for many years has delivered a broad range of short articles.

Improving College Teaching, edited by Calvin B. T. Lee and written by teachers and administrators, covers a wide variety of subjects and innovations.

The Importance of Teaching: A Memorandum to the New Teacher, is a guide to self-examination for those entering the profession.

Teaching in a Junior College, by Roger H. Garrison, deals with problems peculiar to junior and other kinds of 2-year colleges.

The Graduate Student as Teacher, prepared by Vincent Nowles, Kenneth Clark, and Miriam Rock reports a project at the University of Rochester.

Little in the literature on college teaching is prepared from the standpoint of the disciplines. Much that has been produced is general. It is to this deficiency that the present work is directed. At a period when it may seem perilous to write anything concerning higher education in the United States, the contributions in this work have been assembled with the conviction that all dedicated teachers are seeking ways of improving their teaching and of providing relevant subject matter as they challenge their students. It is the hope of those responsible for the work that it will be helpful to all college teachers and especially to those entering the profession.

Robert G. Bone
Project Director

Advisory Committee

Russell M. Cooper, University of South Florida, chairman
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Maxwell H. Goldberg, Pennsylvania State University
Harold L. Hodgkinson, University of California, Berkeley
Arthur H. Livermore, American Association for the Advancement of Science
Paul L. Ward, American Historical Association
Winslow R. Hatch, Division of Higher Education Research, U. S. Office of Education.

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INTRODUCTION: THE COLLEGE TEACHER TODAY

by Russell Cooper*

> "I will do such things, -
> What they are, yet I know not; but they shall be
> The terrors of the earth! -- King Lear

At a time when inarticulate fury and a deep sense of betrayal are being translated into irrational violence on American campuses, it behooves the teaching profession to consider seriously the inadequacies and lapses of which it stands accused. Under the best of circumstances, teachers should be eager and active in searching out ways to improve their performance. Now, more than ever before, the public at large and the young in particular pose penetrating questions for institutions of higher learning. Teachers are called upon to defend the relevance of the subject matter they offer, to adopt new styles and techniques in teaching an ever-increasing number of students with varying backgrounds and disparate expectations, and to consider the influence, actual and potential, of higher education upon the social problems of the day.

In the quieter past, the home, the church, and to a degree industry have been dominant influences on the culture and mores of the nation. Now, institutions of higher learning find themselves closer to the center of the stage than ever before. An inescapable by-product of this new eminence and influence is responsibility for ensuring relevance in subject matter, challenge and intellectual excitement in providing and guiding learning experiences, and enlightening leadership in the development and improvement of society.

Ironically, at the very time when all components of society are demanding greater educational opportunity and college graduates with increased competence, willing and able to bring new order, justice, and human dignity to a world in chaos, much that the university has traditionally offered is scorned and rejected. At the very time the conscientious teacher is striving to present relevant concepts, information, and techniques effectively to rapidly multiplying numbers of impatient students, he must face vast amounts of new knowledge which should be sorted, assimilated, reorganized, and prepared for the classroom.

This volume has been written in the conviction that, while most teachers are well aware of the difficulties and satisfactions of effective teaching and share the assumption that there is no single exclusive method of excellent teaching, both the novice instructor and the senior professor can profit from a fresh and direct examination of the process of teaching and learning in higher education. Most academics concede that there is no such person as a "perfect" teacher and that any teacher who is genuinely content with his performance merely demonstrates that his goals were so modest it was possible for him to reach them. No responsible teacher lays claim to final truths which will guarantee perfection in the practice of teaching; nevertheless, many young teachers can learn much from those who have continued to learn and have been willing to test new ideas and to adapt those that proved successful. Veteran teachers can offer reliable suggestions concerning ventures likely to be productive and those likely to continue to lead to frustration and failure.

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*Dr. Cooper is dean, College of Liberal Arts, University of South Florida, and Chairman, Joint Committee on College Teaching.

Students know--and act upon their knowledge--that some teachers are more effective than others, not merely or even necessarily more learned but more resourceful in engaging and exciting students and launching them on intellectual adventures of their own. Students also often recognize more astutely than faculty colleagues or academic administrators that many teachers are at their best with particular kinds of students but either fail to challenge with other types or to be appropriately compassionate. The lackluster lecturer may be a deft and probing seminar leader; the brilliant and dramatic expositor may be the overbearing monologist who frustrates small-group discussion. Whatever his gifts or limitations, the teacher with a vocation must be alertly self-critical; he must seek continually for increased effectiveness in communication and intellectual engagement; he must check repeatedly and with painful honesty to ensure that the knowledge he endeavors to communicate and the skills he seeks to develop are, and are demonstrated to be, relevant to the time and to the students.

This work has been designed primarily for those newly embarked upon a teaching career whether as neophyte faculty members at the end of graduate preparation or as teaching assistants in a university. But even the veteran teacher, like the admirable Clerk of Oxenford, with a mind open to fresh suggestion, should find much in these pages to inspire reflection and experimentation. Individual readers may be more interested in some sections than in others; however, a reading of the whole book should repay the effort, as it sets the task of teaching in full perspective.

This work reflects a deep and abiding common concern among leaders of national professional societies for the improvement of quality and the insurance of relevance in teaching in their several fields. If it succeeds in stimulating teachers to improve the practice of their art and craft and sustains them in their efforts, all those who have contributed to it will feel richly rewarded.

THE TASK OF THE TEACHER IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

by Kenneth E. Boulding [*]

TEACHING AS A SOCIAL SYSTEM

All human development and, one is tempted to add, all evolutionary development of any kind, is essentially a process of learning. Formal education, which might be defined as those learning processes which are assisted by a teacher, is only part of the total learning process and it must be evaluated in the light of the total process. This is particularly important in learning about social systems, because a great deal of what we know about social systems is learned outside of formal teaching. It is learned from members of the family in which we grow up, from playmates, schoolmates, comic books, television, and so on. We cannot become human without learning a good deal about the social system in which we find ourselves. Any formal teaching about social systems, therefore, must take as its background fairly complex images of society and of social relations which are built up in the ordinary experience of life.

A good deal of this "folk knowledge" of social systems lies below the level of reflective thinking. We learn what is the appropriate behavior in different social groups, very much as we learn to work, without much self-conscious theory of what we are doing. Folk knowledge of social systems, however, does express itself consciously in a body of "popular wisdom" in the form of aphorisms and proverbs. These represent a rich, though by no means systematic and consistent, body of folk wisdom about human relations. The very inconsistency, as expressed for instance in "out of sight, out of mind," and "absence makes the heart grow fonder," may well reflect the richness, complexity, and inconsistency of the social system itself. Even the social sciences rely in part on the folk knowledge of the social scientists. Nevertheless, as the social scientists move toward maturity, they tend to diverge in their content more and more from the body of folk wisdom.

We have somewhat the same problem in the physical and biological sciences. Here, however, the scientific knowledge is more remote from folk knowledge and can be built up from its own foundations. Thus the fact that what we learn in school about the solar system seems to contradict our daily experience does not bother us very much for the contradiction can fairly easily be resolved. In social systems, however, the habit of generalizing from personal experience is so widespread that contradictions between "common sense" and the more sophisticated image of the world which comes out of scientific inquiry are not so easy to resolve. Nevertheless, it is the principal task of formal education in schools and colleges to expand the student's image of the world beyond his personal experience and to give him an image which encompasses the total system of the earth or even the universe.

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[*] Dr. Boulding is professor of economics and Program Director, Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado, and immediate past president of The American Economic Association.

The awkward mixture of folk and formal knowledge which constitutes even the sophisticated images of the social system may still give the teacher of the social sciences a certain advantage, in that the process of teaching and learning is itself part of the social system. Neither the physicist nor his students have ever been in - or even seen - an electron, nor has the biologist ever been in a cell, but both the teacher and the student of social systems have participated actively in many social systems of many different kinds. This potential advantage is by no means always exploited, for formal training in the social sciences does not always transfer into sensitivity in the interpretation of particular social systems in which the social scientist operates. Not only are the conclusions of research on the transfer of training very depressing, but the behavior of social scientists and their professional associations does not always reflect high standards of sophistication. Nevertheless, one hopes (perhaps foolishly) that the teacher in the social sciences should be in a particularly good situation to develop some concept of what he is doing as part of a larger social process. It is to be hoped then, that he may perceive the teaching and learning process itself as essential to all social systems, by which they transmit and expand that stock of knowledge on which all the other activities of a society are based. Hopefully, again, therefore, the teacher of the social sciences is perhaps in a better position than other teachers to visualize his impact. This is not merely the immediate product of the class that he is teaching, but consists of what happens to his students, to himself, and to the social systems in which they participate for the rest of their lives as a result of their experience in class. The teacher may then see that the main purpose of formal education is to facilitate the student's continuation of learning throughout his life. It does this in a number of ways. It gives the student a vocabulary which will enable him to understand further communications and so continue his learning beyond the limits of the classroom. This vocabulary may include not only words, but also mathematical and statistical symbols. It includes also conceptual contexts which should enable the student to fit further communications into a structure of increasing knowledge.

The study of human learning is likely to be an extremely important area in the social sciences in the next generation and should produce marked changes in the practice of teaching. Teaching at all levels today is a skill based more on folk knowledge than on any explicit scientific knowledge of the learning process, and while folk knowledge is real knowledge in the sense that with its aid we have obviously succeeded in teaching people something over the centuries, it has limited horizons of development which were almost certainly reached long ago. It is doubtful whether teaching today is much more effective in transmitting knowledge than it was in the schools of Athens. It is possible that we are on the edge of a substantial advance which should make teaching in this generation a peculiar challenge and delight. Thus if a teacher, especially in the field of the social sciences, can be aware that his classroom is a social system and that his teaching is also a form of research which may contribute to the advance of knowledge in this area, its significance is all the more enhanced.

We need to break down the view that teaching and research are totally unrelated activities. It is not only that teaching may be a form of research in human learning, but also that the act of teaching forces a re-examination of the subject matter being taught, no matter what it is. Every good teacher learns as he teaches. This indeed is one of the miracles of teaching; it is not a form of exchange in which the teacher loses what the student gains, but an extraordinary act of development in which, after the class, not only the student knows more, but the teacher knows more. Teaching should also continually force a re-examination of the subject matter that is being taught, for the difficulties in transmitting subject matter from teacher to students come very frequently from a defect in the content of what the teacher is trying to transmit. It is much easier to believe nonsense than it is to teach it, and the very act of trying to teach nonsense becomes a self-correcting force.

One would hope to see considerable progress in the next generation in the integration of evaluation in the learning process. Little as we know about human learning, one of the principles that seem to be emerging is that evaluative feedback is a crucial element in all modifications of the image of the world. Evaluative feedback is crucial in folk learning. Thus a child learns his native language largely by the selective responses of his parents and the people around him. When he starts babbling he soon learns to select the sounds which are received with favorable response, those on which, as it were, he gets an "A" and to reject those which produce no response or unfavorable responses. Similarly, we learn to find our way around town, because if our image of the world does not correspond to reality we get unfavorable evaluative feedback, often very quickly. If we go to the grocery store and it has moved, our disappointment produces a rapid learning process. Similarly, we learn who are our friends and enemies, we learn that immediate responses are not always wise ones, and we learn what gets us into trouble and what does not. The method of science, likewise, is essentially the method of organized evaluative feedback. It is only through the failureof predictions that science progresses.

It is only in the classroom that evaluation is sharply divorced from the learning process. The student does not learn easily why he has failed. Indeed, often he does not even get back his examination papers. The whole secret of programed learning, insofar as there is one, is precisely to build evaluative feedback closely into the learning process, so that every time a student does anything it may be evaluated and the evaluation fed back to him. Programed learning, however, is not the answer to all our problems. There are many learning processes which involve the structuring of complex images of the world in which we have to learn to operate without much positive feedback or reinforcement for long periods. The mysterious processes by which the slow building up of vocabulary and grammar eventually leads to fluency in a language, or by which little bits of learning eventually add up to mastery of a musical instrument are very little understood. Programed learning, if it is too picayune, may discourage people from learning out of boredom, or out of a sense of being insulted, or out of a loss of personal dignity. A good deal of the function of the teacher is to cheer students up, to encourage the discouraged, and to keep alive their sense of dignity and worth in a process which often destroys self-confidence and the sense of personal worth.

One hopes, therefore, that a substantial area of research will be developed in the next generation in the effect of examinations, tests, grades, and other evaluative devices on thelearning process. We must evaluate evaluation itself as an element in a total social process, which is important not only in thelearning process of the student who is being evaluated but also in the learning process of other people, both peers and superiors in the social matrix with whom the student may be related.

All examinations and tests evaluate much more than knowledge of the subject matter. They also evaluate such things as a student's ability to solve puzzles, to write essays, to speak coherently, to organize material, to operate under stress, even the all-important ability to get away with things. If tests do not measure what they are supposed to measure, then decisions which are based on the results will go astray. The evaluation of the overall capacity of persons is a particularly delicate operation, and teachers should at least try to be conscious of what they are doing.

A peculiar difficulty in understanding the theory of the human learning process is that not only do we learn "facts," --that is, images of an external world--but also tastes, ethical values, and capacities for future learning. It is easy to see that our growing image grows towards "values" and that in some sense all learning is "wishful learning," that is, we learn to see the world the way we do because it pays off. On the other hand, we learn about the payoffs themselves, for we do not come into the world like the birds with a complete apparatus of genetically formed values. The values that we learn, furthermore, affect our capacity for further learning. If we learn that we cannot learn, or that we are "no good," we will not learn in the future. This is a system which defies the present skills of the systems analysts. It means, however, that we must be cautious about misinterpreting evaluative feedback, important as this is, for evaluative feedback, if it is poorly constructed, can easily destroy the capacity to learn. How do we distinguish between the kind of feedback which says "I made a mistake which I can correct," and the feedback which says "I made a mistake, therefore I am no good, and I will continue to make mistakes." It may well be that the real difference between good and bad teaching lies precisely in differentiating between various kinds of evaluative feedback.

At the moment the social sciences are very poorly organized to carry on research in the teaching-learning process. In graduate schools the gulf between research and teaching has gotten so wide that hardly any of the regular social science departments will tolerate a Ph.D. thesis in the teaching of its subject. Schools of education, unfortunately, often occupy the lowest position in prestige in the whole academic community. This is perhaps in part because of their use of the police power to force prospective teachers to take required courses, perhaps in part because of the general location of education in the grants sector of the economy which tends to make it unremunerative by comparison, say, with law or engineering. Whatever the reason for this low status, it is nothing short of a disaster. Some persons believe that we might get along without good lawyers, who are engaged, after all, mainly in redistributing old property and resolving personal disputes. Some also believe that in these days we might even get along without good doctors, for the improvement in public health and the increase in the expectation in human life have been accomplished mainly by people outside the medical profession. If, however, we cannot transmit the knowledge which is in the heads of one generation into the heads of the next, society will inevitably decay. In any scale of social priorities, therefore, teaching should obviously stand very high. It is indeed a major challenge to the social sciences to find out why teaching and the study of teaching do not have a higher prestige and perhaps to recommend measures to correct this serious defect in our social system.

The first step toward a new science of learning and teaching would be, as it has been in many sciences, to develop a better"natural history." At the moment each teacher is isolated in his classroom. Over the course of his life he probably learns a good deal out of sheer experience. He learns that some things work and some things do not. If he is a good teacher, he will get a fair amount of feedback from his students and will modify his procedures accordingly. At the moment, however, there is practically no way by which this individual knowledge can be disseminated. The biological sciences owe a great debt to bird watching, even if bird watching is not strictly a science. Class watching, however, is regarded as a degrading business to be indulged in only by those who are supervising student teachers. In university teaching, especially, any outside intervention in the classroom is regarded as a deep threat to status, and resistance to it almost reaches proportions of paranoia.

There are, however, some hopeful signs. Some progress is being made by the economists in reporting experiments in the teaching of economics, thanks in part to the Joint Committee on Economic Education and the Committee on Teaching of Economics of the American Economic Association. Similar progress is being made in other social sciences. A new journal is proposed in the teaching of economics which may be useful in opening up a new discourse. One possible means of freeing the teacher from the isolation of his classroom is the development of "team teaching," even if this only takes the mild form of having two colleagues teach a single class. This perhaps is less threatening than having observers from outside, and if two people teach the same class at least they will have something to talk about, and a conversation between them may attract others.

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES ON TEACHING

Three influences coming from outside the profession may affect the teaching process in the next generation, but exactly what the impact will be is hard to predict. The first of these is the increasing student dissatisfaction and unrest. This is in part no doubt a consequence of the general disorders of our day and reflects what is perhaps a general unhappiness of the academic community with the draft, the rising power of the military, an "imperialistic" national image which seems more appropriate to an earlier period, and the increasing use of violence by the police. At least part of the student dissatisfaction, however, is directed specifically at the teaching and learning experiences to which they are subjected, and one must honestly confess it is not wholly without foundation. A dean once told me that the one excuse he had never had a faculty member give is that he had to spend time preparing for his classes. The sheer economics - of the universities especially - gives strong marginal payoffs to research and writing and even to speaking outside the classroom, whereas the only reward professors get who spend a lot of time in teaching is, to quote W. S. Gilbert, "the gratifying feeling that our duty has been done." Itis a tribute indeed to the moral integrity of university faculties that teaching does not disintegrate even below its present level, when we reflect how meager are thepayoffs.

If student dissatisfaction can be channeled into some positive schemes for the improvement of teaching it may well be one of the fortunate by-products of an otherwise rather calamitous era. Certainly the efforts at student evaluation of courses which a good many universities now tolerate could perhaps be linked up with a program of research and development in teaching which would make these evaluations less casual and more reliable. We are all aware, of course, that a popular teacher is notnecessarily a good one, and that many students are not able to identify their best teachers until they have been out of school for 10 years. Still, popular teachers are frequently good ones, and there is probably some correlation between popularity and the capacity for inspiring students to learn.

The second outside effect on the teaching-learning process is likely to result from a massive attempt by manufacturers to introduce hardware into the teaching process, in the form of teaching machines, computer-assisted instruction, audiovisual aids and the like. If the teaching profession remains passive in the face of this onslaught it may well be disorganized by it, and the result will be disheartening if not disastrous. We could easily see a paralle to the experience of the medical profession with commercial drug houses, thepositive features of which are constantly being threatened by the incapacity of the medical profession to control its own inputs of information. It is not easy to see an answer to this problem. The teaching profession is not going to be able to control the research and development which are going into teaching devices. The only control, indeed, would come from a well-organized program in research in teaching which could act towards the teaching machines as, shall we say, the critics towards a play. In view of the reliance of the teaching profession, especially at the elementary and secondary level, on compulsory schooling, and even the use of the police power in the accreditation of teachers, a little commercial admixture into the occupation may not be wholly a bad thing, for if people can make money out of something honestly there is continual pressure for improvement. Nevertheless, whatever beneficial effects the hardward revolution, if that is what it is going to be, can produce are likely to be much augmented if the teaching profession is organized to handle it and to criticize.

A great deal depends here on having a positive theory of teaching which can take (or leave) hardward in the light of testing, refining, and revising the theoretical structure. The great danger of hardware is that it tends to concentrate on specific and particular performances and behavior and cannot by its very nature be concerned with the total development of the individual. It is argued that hardware will relieve the teacher from burdensome and unnecessary duties and leave him free to concentrate on the great personal task of developing the total personality of the student. This sounds fine, but one has one's suspicions, and a nightmarish future is not inconceivable in which the teacher becomes primarily an electronic repairman and the students all turn into well-trained rogues and clods. It may be, of course, that the hardware will not be efficient enough to justify its cost. The teacher, as someone has said, is a non-linear computer of enormous capacity produced initially by entirely unskilled labor, and the economics of biology in the long run may outrun the economics of mechanical and electrical engineering. Here, however, we must simply wait and see and be prepared for the unexpected.

The third, and perhaps in the long run the most important, effect on the teaching of social sciences is likely to come from the content and theorganization of the social sciences. The change in the content of the social sciences as time goes on obviously affects what is taught. One is reminded of the old story about the alumnus who visited his old department and found that the questions that were being asked on the examinations were the same as those that he had answered a generation ago. He was reassured of progress, however, by the professor, who explained that while the questions might be the same, the answers were now different. Certainly in the last 50 years there has been a marked change in the answers. For instance, in economics the Keynesian system has triumphed, in psychology the instincts have been abandoned, in political science quantification is no longer a dirty word.

From the point of view of the teacher, perhaps one of the major questions of the next generation is whether the social sciences will exhibit any convergence or reorganization. The existing division into economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and so on is the result of a long historical process with at least some random elements in it. Whatever may have been past justifications for the existing division, we should not necessarily assume that these will persist indefinitely. In fact, all social sciences are studying the same thing, that is, the total social system.

This might be called the "sociosphere" by analogy with the biosphere or the atmosphere. It consists of all three billion human beings; their inputs and outputs of commodities and information which are associated with them; the roles which they occupy, and the organizations which are constructed out of these roles; the symbols, images, and knowledge which are embodied in their nervous systems; and so on. Social systems are differentiated fairly sharply from biological systems by the importance of information, symbols, and consciousness in them. There is a real difference in systems level between the study of the social system and, say, even the study of human physiology. The social sciences, however, are not divided from each other by differences in systems level, but by the fact that they abstract somewhat different elements and concentrate on different parts of the social system. Thus, economics concentrates on exchange and exchangeables and on how the social system is organized through exchange. It concentrates heavily on those organizations and institutions which are concerned primarily with exchange, such as banks, corporations and public finance agencies. Political science concentrates primarily on institutions which are organized through legitimated threat, such as governments. Sociology deals primarily with integrative relationships and tends to take institutions which concentrate on community and solidarity - and their opposites - such as the family, the church, criminals, the military and so on. Anthropology, historically, has concentrated on the study of small societies and especially of primitive societies. Psychology concentrates on studies of the behavior of individual organisms; social psychology, on behavior of small groups

The arbitrary nature of the existing divisions of the social sciences is reflected first in the fact that almost any attempt to characterize them, will produce substantial protest from the practitioners. Thus, economists will protest that what they are really studying is the allocation of resources under conditions of scarcity. On the other hand, political scientists want to get into this one too and define political science as an authoritative allocation of resources through public institutions. Sociologists will complain that economists have no monopoly on the concept of exchange, but that social exchange is an essential characteristic of sociological systems. Anthropology, at least in the guise of social anthropology, pushes its claim towards larger and largersocieties. Another aspect of the arbitrariness of the present divisions is that the differences within the existing disciplines are probably greater than the differences between them. This is especially true of psychology, which is an extraordinary aggregation of almost unrelated studies which moves close to physiology and ethology at one end and into clinical psychology and "literary psychoanalysis" at the other. It could be argued indeed that there is a fundamental difference in the systems level between the "micro" and the "macro" in virtually all the existing disciplines.

In defense of the existing structure of the social sciences one can only say that each of the disciplines creates a subculture, the members of which can talk fairly easily to each other, but not easily to those in other disciplines. If, however, the existing disciplinary structure does not in fact represent the most useful mode of division, the development of these disciplinary subcultures is an all the more damning indictment. We can hardly take much satisfaction in the reflection that the training of social scientists has become so highly specialized that each has tended to create a little world of discourse of its own with high protective tariffs against intrusions from other fields. In the universities especially the fact that the major political power rests with the departments and the professions which they represent means that attempts to teach a unified social science are regarded with suspicion or even with contempt. Each discipline tends to live within itself and to think that there is not much that it has to learn from others. The economist, for instance, is not trained to think of economics as simply a contribution to a larger system, but tends to think of it as something completely self-contained and unrelated to other disciplines. A case perhaps can be made out for this attitude at the graduate level, where the tricks of the trade have to be learned, but at the high school or undergraduate level, this intellectual isolationism can be disastrous. There is great need for teachers who can respect their own discipline and at the same time give the student a sense of the totality out of which he can abstract some particular segment. An occupational disease of the academic is that of mistaking an abstraction for reality, and this is particularly dangerous in the social sciences.

A serious problem for teaching in the social sciences is created by the fact that the question of content becomes more difficult the lower the grade level of the student. At the graduate level there is not much of a problem, as the student has to learn the current detailed content of his own profession. At the level of freshman or sophomore courses, which are supposed to be more general, the problem of content is acute. It is a deplorable aspect of the American tradition in higher education that these lower level courses are usually taught by younger faculty members, who are the most ill-prepared to teach them. The German tradition, in which the elementary courses in the subject were usually taught by the senior professor, has much to recommend it, and universities should not be above using economic incentives to persuade senior members to teach elementary courses.

In the high schools and grade schools, the problem of content in the social sciences becomes all the more acute and, apart from some fine work like that of Lawrence Senesh, social science pays little attention to what should be taught in the lower grades. At the high school level, some attention is now being paid to the problem, but with practically no coordination among the different social scientists. What is desperately needed here is an elementary general social science of adequate content, but there is literally no apparatus in the professions or in the schools for producing one. If anything, the interest of university people in the high schools is contributing to even further fractionation of social science. Economists are pushing economics, sociologists are pushing sociology and so on, with potentially disastrous results.

A word should be said here for geography and history, each of which has an ambiguous, but highly important, relation to the social sciences. Geography has a strong claim to be the principal integrator of all the sciences insofar as it studies the earth as a total system. The fact that it is already well established in the lower schools suggests that it could play a key role in introducing concepts of the social system in the first twelve grades. Unfortunately, it suffers as a discipline from some lack of organized contact with the social sciences and also from a quite unwarranted feeling of inferiority. It can provide an important link between the social sciences and the biological and physical sciences, and one can visualize a curriculum in which all the sciences are organized in an essentially geographical setting.

History as a discipline straddles the social sciences and the humanities and should indeed provide an important link between them. The historical record, in the larger sense, is the raw material from which all science must come, and the record of human history and experience is the great mine of information from which the precious metals of understanding have to be extracted by an enormous process of orderly sifting and rejection of information. The historian's skill in appraising, sifting, condensing and interpreting the deposits of the historical record is an essential part of the general search for stable patterns and interpretative theories. Here again, if social science is to be taught in the first 12 grades, a great deal of it must be done in the name of history, a kind of history which creates real understanding of both the necessities and the accidents of the total social process. The sociosphere after all is a four-dimensional body with three dimensions of space and one of time. The historian is absolutely necessary to the filling out of the fourth dimension. The social scientists, however, can perform a crucial role in discovering the patterns among the "noise."

It is not easy to be optimistic about the progress of the social sciences towards an integrated body of content, at least in the next generation. Nevertheless, if there is one element in the social system itself which will push us towards this seemingly utopian goal it is the pressure of teaching and the pressure of teachers. We have already noted the impact of teaching on the content of what is taught. One would like to stir up a revolt of the teachers, and especially teachers below the graduate level, against the unsatisfactory nature of much of the content that they are expected to teach. Here again the need for a marriage of teaching and research in a single learning process has never been more clear.

THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AS A SENSITIVE AREA

One of the most critical problems which face the institutions and the practitioners of formal education is their relation to the outside world around them which largely pays for them and yet is apt to be dominated by a "folk culture" with images of the world very different from those which prevail within the walls of the school or college. This problem is perhaps more nearly acute today than at any time in human history, simply because we are in an enormous transition in the state of the human race, largely as a result of formal education and its offshoots in science. Under these circumstances, the tension between the values and images of the academic and scholastic community and those of the outside world is likely to be severe. The physical sciences and the biological sciences had to fight this battle somewhat earlier. On the whole they won it. It is no longer considered threatening by the outside world for a school to teach Copernican astronomy or Einsteinian physics or Darwinian evolution, though we sometimes forget that this was a long hard battle and that until a recent court decision there were still two states of the Union where the teaching of evolution was formally, if ineffectually, prohibited by law. Nowhere in formal education does anybody have to teach that the earth is flat. In the social sciences, however, the equivalent of the image of the flat earth is still very powerful, and people who hold such views are naturally upset by the hertical views which their children bring home from school. The kind of sophisticated images which are involved in such things as the Keynesian economics, the modern theory of the international system, or the sociology of education or religion would create tensions with less sophisticated counterparts even if no value problems were involved. All this puts the teacher of the social sciences into a peculiarly difficult position and makes the ethical problems of teaching which arise in all disciplines acute.

The social sciences thus occupy an area which is much more sensitive than that of the physical or biological sciences. They deal with matters which are controversial, political, and of great importance to people in their daily economic, political, and social lives. At many points the findings and concepts of the social sciences tend to run counter to those of the folk culture, and it is not surprising that opposition is aroused. These matters cannot be ignored by the teacher, for in the first place they are an essential part of the social system which he studies and teaches, and in the second place his students quite rightly come to the social sciences in the hope of finding light on the dark political, social,economic, and ethical controversies of their own day. At least part of the student dissatisfaction in universities today, which is showing some signs of getting into the high schools, arises from the conviction that students are not receiving the help they need in finding what is relevant to their own problems, both personal and political. Students feel a strong need to know more about problems like the draft, the war, urban decay, poverty, racial discrimination, taxation and public expenditure. The teacher of the social sciences simply cannot pretend that these problems do not exist. Neither can he claim that the social sciences give simple and unequivocal answers to them.

The problem arises partly, as we have seen, because the value system of the scientific and academic communities tends to be different from that of the world around them. Science arose in the first place in a small subculture in Europe, which developed an unusual value system, which put a high value on curiosity, openness, and veracity, and a low value on any authority but that of evidence. These values are not characteristic of many folk cultures or even of many fairly well-developed political cultures. They are not characteristic, for instance, of the international system, where secrecy rather than openness, is the rule, power is more highly valued than truth, and veracity is valued only if it serves the purposes of power. In the business community, in the labor movement, and even in the church, the system of ethical priorities may differ in quite important respects from the ethical system of science. The teacher of the social sciences especially must be self-conscious of these matters and is under an almost Hippocratic obligation to encourage the growth of a similar self-consciousness in students. Self-consciousness in any shape, however, may be the enemy of certain folk values. I recall, for instance, once being in the company of some anthropologists on the Fourth of July when the fireworks were starting in the town square, and overhearing one say to another, "Let's go down and see the tribal rites." A good simple-minded patriot might well be scandalized at hearing his sacred observances compared to tribal rites. The acids of self-consciousness, however, are always eating away at traditional legitimacies and, as one of the principal objects of the social sciences is to create social self-consciousness, the threat to ancient legitimacies, which this postulates, may be quite real.

One of the most delicate and important problems in social science is its relation to ethical principles and practices. There is little agreement, indeed, on the nature of its responsibility for them. There are those who argue that this is something which should be left entirely to the folk culture, that formal education has no responsibility for the development of ethical principles of for the inculcation of ethical conduct, and that the social sciences have no more responsibility for this than anybody else. This view seems to me unrealistic. In the first place it is virtually impossible to change the "image of fact" in the mind of a person without at the same time changing his image of value. Our evaluations of the world and our preferences depend on our total view of what the world is like. If a student learns in the family that the earth is flat, we cannot teach him in school that the earth is round without creating a whole set of readjustments of his value system, for if he believes his school teacher he will have to adjust to the fact that his parents are in error. He will have less respect for the opinions of his parents, whatever respect he may have for their persons, and his whole value system is very likely to take a subtle shift, for he is very likely to have less respect for his family's preferences in general. The great debate about indoctrination which has been going on in educational circles for two generations cannot be resolved by pretending that we can have a value-free education.

A further problem arises, as we have noted above, because science itself has a strong ethical base and cannot exist without strong ethical principles which may easily run into conflict with the ethical principles of the culture around it. Any kind of epistemological process involves some kind of "payoffs." Human learning indeed is inconceivable without a set of preferences. Wherever there is a set of preferences that is assumed to have some sort of universal validity, or at least to go beyond those tastes which are purely personal and about which there is supposed to be no disputing, an ethical system is involved. Knowledge without ethics, and education without ethics are therefore inconceivable. The principle that scientists and educators simply take their ethical systems from the community around them is untenable. This forces the question: Does the social scientist, as representing that segment of the intellectual, scientific, and educational community which specializes in the study of social systems, have a special responsibility for the formulation, or even the propagation. of ethical principles which are appropriate for the educational enterprise. This is a view which most social scientists would reject, probably on the grounds that their concern is only with what is, not with what ought to be. This. however, assumes a naive epistemology. We cannot get to know things simply by comparing our images with reality, for as Hume pointed out a long time ago, this cannot be done; images can only be compared with images. The scientific method is not a method of discovering truth. It is a method for organizing feedback from error and so, if hopes are realized for approaching truth by progressively eliminating error. The proposition that we should eliminate error, however, is an ethical proposition, one indeed which can even be called into question, for the proposition, that under some circumstances ignorance may be bliss, is not one that can be disproved easily, if at all.

Furthermore, the ethical principles which a society holds profoundly affect its preferences, its decisions, its behavior, and hence its dynamic course. Even the social scientist who eschews admonition and exhortation, or thinks he does, cannot avoid studying the impact of the ethical principles on society for these are an essential part of his subject matter. What is more, insofar as he is interested in teaching and learning as a social system, he should have a special interest in the ethical principles which are appropriate to this social system, because he is a participant in it. If he believes in self-improvement and in improving his own performance as a teacher, he should be willing to scrutinize his own behavior, not only in the light of the general folk ethic to which he adheres, but in the light of his image as a social scientist studying the teaching-learning process.

The Quakers have developed an ingenious method of collective ethical analysis in the "queries," a set of loaded questions which are intended in these days primarily for self-examination but which also are continually revised to meet the consensus of the group. Thus the query has a certain advantage over the "commandment" in that even the query itself may be questioned. Hence, it leads to ethical analysis rather than to dogma. The following queries for teachers are therefore intended to provoke ethical analysis and they are. of course, relevant to all teachers. Social scientists, however, may have a peculiar responsibility for seeking further knowledge about the implied social system.

Query One

Do I abuse my position of superior status to the student by treating him as a moral or social inferior?

The problem of the status structure of the classroom, or more generally the problem of the teacher-student relationship, to success in the teaching-learning process is one that needs much further study. To a certain extent the teacher-student relationship by its very nature is hierarchical, in that a teacher is supposed to know more than a student or at least he is supposed to teach the student more than the student teaches him. In an unbalanced exchange of this kind hierarchy always arises. Furthermore, in the organization of education the teacher is usually in a superior position in the threat system. He can threaten a student with failure as a student much more effectively than the student can threaten him with failure as a teacher. He grades the student, the student does not usually grade him. This is the kind of situation in which arises the possibility of abuse. We need to know much more about the effect of exploitation of status on the learning process. We need to know more, for instance, about the effects of bullying and sarcasm in creating "blocks" to learning. On the other hand, it is also possible that too much emphasis on equality of status between the teacher and the student, by making the student inattentative or disrespectful and unwilling to accept what the teacher has to say, may also diminish the effectiveness of the learning process. One of the principal research problems here is the measurement and detection of these status attitudes. At the moment they are never clearly defined in the evaluation of the teacher, and because of this many teachers who do enormous damage to the learning process may be employed.

Query Two

Am I careful to avoid using my authority to force acceptance as fact of propositions which may be only opinion or hypothesis? Do I tolerate honest disagreement? Would I be pleased if I were ever proved to be wrong by a student?

This question is closely related to the first. The authority of the teacher, because he is also the examiner or judge, is dangerously great, and the teacher may be unwilling to accept challenge to his authority, either from his students or from the world around him. It is part of the myth of science that authority comes only from the "real world," not from authoritative persons, past or present. It is not easy for any kind of scientist to get this attitude over in the classroom where the status symbols--the desk, the podium, the blackboard--all reinforce the authority of the teacher rather than the authority of the subject matter itself. One could visualize some interesting experimental work in this field with a view to finding out what kind of teaching produces the scientific ethic and what kind produces the authoritarian ethic.

Query Three

Do I express my overt or covert hostility to my students in my teaching? Am I irritated by student failure, or am I quick to detect and encourage growth in knowledge and understanding, however slow or imperfect?

This query raises the question of the personality of the teacher, rather than his attitude towards status, although the two are clearly related, for hostile people have a strong tendency to seek authoritarian status. It would be interesting to know whether teaching attracts more hostile personalities than other occupations. We might well find that teachers are sharply bimodal, that some are attracted into the profession because they find the transmission of knowledge pleasurable. These people are likely to be friendly towards the student, rather than hostile. Others, however, may enter the profession because they have failed elsewhere. One recalls Bernard Shaw's unkind crack, "Those who can, do. Those who cannot, teach." Teachers who are frustrated executives or politicians are very likely to work out their frustrations and hostility on the student, and this may be damaging to the learning process. Here again, an instrument which would detect this kind of hostility and frustration would be of enormous value, for the teacher who is both hostile and authoritatian may be enormously damaging.

Query Four

Am I myself interested in the subject matter which I am teaching? Do I enjoy learning more about it and do I carry over to the student my own enthusiasm for the subject?

There is a widespread belief that a teacher's enthusiasm for his subject can compensate for a good many deficiencies in his technique. A famous example of this was

John R. Commons of the University of Wisconsin, who is reported to have been a very poor lecturer; yet he inspired a whole generation of students who were active, for instance, in developing the New Deal under Roosevelt and who in many ways changed the face of America. The negative proposition is probably more easily demonstrated than the positive one; certainly the teacher who is bored with his own subject makes life miserable for his students as well as for himself. For this reason, there is much to be said for rotating courses among teachers so that nobody teaches the same course for too long.

Query Five

Do I convey to my students both the setting and the significance of my subject matter so that it appears neither isolated nor irrelevant?

This query is closely related to the previous one though it covers a slightly different point. A teacher may often be enthusiastic about his own particular speciality, without himself appreciating adequately where it stands in the great republic of learning and what its broad significance may be. There is a certain division of opinion here between those who favor orderly presentation of subject matter and those who believe that the main function of the teacher is to digress, assuming that the textbook is usually orderly enough, and that the function of the teacher is to introduce a little creative disorder by showing the student that no subject is as tidy as it seems.

Query Six

Do I convey to the student the necessity for intellectual discipline and a sense of the need for hard work on difficult intellectual tasks if the practical problems of our society are to be solved?

This query should perhaps be addressed particularly to idealistic teachers who have idealistic students. Good will is a complement, not a substitute, for good knowledge. Likewise, euphoria is a very poor substitute for truth. While dullness has a strong claim to be considered as the most deadly sin of the teacher, excitement in itself is not always a virtue, for it may distract people from doing the hard, slogging work that is always necessary for the mastery of a difficult subject. There is a delicate problem of balance here. The teacher, especially in the social sciences, can easily discourage the idealist too greatly by pointing out the extraordinary difficulties which lie in the way of good social change. Like Hamlet, we need to avoid being "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." The teacher in the social sciences, especially, has to walk a difficult tightrope between the kind of despair and atrophy of the moral sense, which sometimes comes from over intellectualization, and the hyperactivity, which can easily be destructive of those who are both morally aroused and proudly ignorant.

Query Seven

Do I convey to the student the importance of technical skill and at the same time leave him problem-oriented rather than technique-oriented, the master and not the servant of the skills which he has acquired?

This query, again, is closely related to the preceding one, but it is addressed to what is the particular vice of the social sciences, especially of economics. Techniques usually arise in response to problems, and certainly one needs to encourage the use of the best intellectual tools. On the other hand, techniques tend to have a certain life of their own and to become ends in themselves. This is particularly true of advanced statistical and mathematical techniques. Furthermore, the ability to use a technique and to develop technical skill becomes a point of professional pride and a measure of professional achievement. This is dangerous if it leads to an evaluation of persons on the basis of their ability to manipulate existing techniques, rather than from the point of view of their ability to struggle with the "real world." The danger of technique-oriented education is that it creates what Veblen called "trained incapacity," in that persons who are trained exclusively in techniques prefer to do only the things that can be done with the techniques which they have learned rather than to tackle jobs which may be more important but which are unresponsive to their existing tools, like a surgeon insisting on using his scalpel to dig away a snowdrift. The teacher often tends to underrate what he does not understand and overrate what he does understand, and it is hard for him to walk a tightrope between these two extremes.

Query Eight

Is my relation to other teachers one of cooperation in a great common task of transmitting and extending the knowledge structure of society, or am I jealous and suspicious of others? Am I conscious of my citizenship in the academic community? Do I insist on doing only those things which will lead to my personal advancement?

This query raises large and difficult issues. Advancement in the academic community rarely comes from good teaching. Still more rarely does it come from doing the necessary "menial" intellectual labor of the academic community. In the absence of an economic system which rewards good teaching directly there is great necessity for constant reiteration of the ethical principles of what constitutes "good citizenship" in the academic community. Communities, however, may be subject to "ethical strain" where the organization of the community, and especially of the reward structure, does not conform to real interests and productivities. Ethical strain is a much neglected area in the social sciences--indeed, the concept is hardly recognized. We are becoming intensely aware of it, however, in such problems as economic development, relations with government, and the power structure in general. Hypocrisy, subterfuge, and corruption are visible symptoms of ethical strain. The social sciences may perhaps make an important contribution to solving this problem by pointing out that the answer to ethical strain may not lie in stepping up the level of exhortation and preaching. It may lie rather in reorganizing the institutions and the payoffs of society itself. This is as true inside the academic community as it is outside it. It is one of the paradoxes of the social sciences indeed that whereas social science used to study practically every tribe and every form of human organization and relationship, the one great unstudied area is the university itself, perhaps because it is too close to home. A much more serious social science study of educational organizations than we have had in the past should clearly be on the agenda for the future.

Query Nine

Do I have a proper sense of my own dignity as a teacher and researcher, and do I have an equivalent sense of the dignity of all those with whom I come in contact?

This query perhaps summarizes all the others. Unless the teacher has a sense of his own worth and of the importance of his task, he should be doing something else.

* * *

I am content to leave the matter at this point and conclude with a personal testimony that for 35 years I have found teaching, with all its frustrations and difficulties, to be a very good life, and I expect the situation to continue in the future.

Suggestions for Further Reading on the Teaching of Economics

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TEACHING POLITICAL SCIENCE

by Leonard J. Fein [*]

Since we have hardly any criteria for measuring good teaching, we have hardly any instructions on how to be a good teacher; so much so, that the issue itself is generally treated with some embarrassment in academic circles. Except as one is truly an extraordinary teacher, in which case we defer to his gift, sustained interest in teaching is viewed as something of a gaucherie. This shocks our friends and distresses our students, but it makes perfectly good sense, since we conventionally assume that good teachers are born, not made. (If they were made, then we should be able to make them; since we do not profess to know how to make them, yet they continue to turn up here and there, they must be born.)

The logic is somewhat circular, and quite like a self-fulfilling prophecy. Having established that good teaching, when it happens, is essentially accidental, and hence not scientifically reproducible, we snicker at the "educationists" who profess to have identified "rules" for our work. There does exist, for example, a body of literature which employs scientific standards to identify the best methods for presenting various kinds of knowledge to students. Yet this is a literature which is almost totally unknown to anyone who is likely to make use of it. Thus its validity has not been tested, except experimentally.

Although random efforts to improve the quality of teaching, and perhaps to apply the same standards in our analysis of teaching that we apply in our research, seem to be increasing, it is, on the whole, unlikely that they will grow substantially. For the most part, such efforts are directed at curricular revision, or at restructuring of course contents; they rarely deal with the nature of the relationship between the teacher and his students. And, even when they do, they must overcome an ethic of futility which is firmly established in our graduate schools. So long as graduate students are nowhere provided with instruction in the process of teaching itself, they will continue to believe (perhaps correctly, perhaps not) that teaching cannot be taught. (The fact that many graduate students are provided with opportunity for some teaching experience is entirely irrelevant, since that experience is rarely supervised. They have merely been initiated earlier, not prepared better.) Indeed, some graduate schools go so far as to establish an ethic which views teaching not only as unteachable, but also as unimportant. (This, too, is plausible, since we generally come to view as important only that which is interesting, and as interesting, only that which we can control.)

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This is the setting. It is where we must begin, partly as apology--no recipes will follow--partly in the simple faith that before we can make repairs in our effort we must understand the sources of our failings. The litany of impediments to successful teaching might easily be extended, including, as it does, the reward structure and incentive systems of the academic world, the ethic of the teacher's absolute autonomy in his classroom, and so on. But our task here is not so much to list each external impeding circumstance as it is to provide some internal guidance to those who would, despite the odds and for whatever the reason, seek self-consciousness as teachers. Accordingly, I move now from this opening pot-shot at the academic culture-in-general to some problems of teaching which are more specific to the social sciences, and thence to some diffident suggestions on the translation of self-consciousness into effectiveness.

I

It is a commonplace that students of the social sciences must unlearn a good deal of what they think they know. Since they have been learning about society from birth, they have accumulated a vast amount of information, usually in the form of anecdotes. Our problem is to force them not only to distinguish between anecdote and evidence, but also to generalize from experiences outside their ken. That is, we must teach our students to move from the particular details of their own lives to the general experiences of social systems.

One set of details which our students bring to us concerns moral judgements. These moral judgements--call them values, or norms--are barriers to effective social scientific education, for they bar the student from that consciousness of self and of culture which is the central equipment of the social scientist. We are, by profession, marginal men; much of our skill lies in the deftness with which we can stand aside from the moment, apart from the place, and thereby assert perspective.

Yet we are, be it noted, marginal as professionals, not necessarily as people. Although we study magic by day, we may yet practice it by night, so long as we can tell the night from the day.

To communicate this to students is no easy task. More often than not, we bring the student only part of the way, and the most dangerous part, at that. We teach him, by word and deed, how to uncouple himself from his native commitments, how to snicker at the sacred. But from such liberation to true autonomy as a free-floating intellectual is a giant step, of which most are incapable. Instead, therefore, of binding the student to the community of scholars, we more often than not rest our effort with loosening the bonds of tradition, leaving our charges with no roots at all.

The risk that students of the social sciences will become merely homeless, not wise, is related to the emergence of social science as an ideology rather than a perspective. Especially among thse who are uncertain of their own ability to navigate as "free-floaters," there is a marked tendency to convert analytic categories into norms. Thus, modernization, for example, becomes a commitment as well as a concept, rationality becomes telos as well as tool. The result, of course, is a most non-scientific patronization of the non-rational, and the attendant conversion of social science into a way of life, rather than its acceptance as a mode of thought. When the social sciences become a sub-culture, their utility to society is undermined, since their practitioners are necessarily and correctly suspect as advocates rather than analysts, imprisoned by their own values no less than the masses they presume to study.

Especially in the teaching of political science and sociology, the effort to sustain the distinction between social science as a mode of analysis and social science as a way of life is exceedingly difficult. Increasingly, our students come to us with problem-solving orientations, and seek in our lore confirmation of their value positions. Increasingly, we ourselves are professionally engaged in issues of great political moment, which necessarily imply, if indeed they do not make explicit, normative commitments. It is easier by far to treat the commitments as given than to set them aside in favor of a mock neutrality. But in so doing, we tacitly suggest that the commitments themselves somehow grow out of our subject matter, out of our scholarship and our skill, a suggestion which, at the very least, requires constant re-examination. As scholars, our concern is with evidence. Some commitments are amenable to empiric examination, others are not. To neglect the distinction between what we seek as citizens and what we know as scholars, thereby claiming more for social science than it merits, is in the end to denigrate the value of the discipline. Social science is neither omnipotent nor irrelevant. To establish its relevance with precision and honesty remains a taxing challenge; to evade the challenge is to debase the currency, hence to demean the profession.

II

Teachers commonly face a choice between inspiring their students and informing them. In some cases, the choice is only theoretical, for the teacher is either incapable of inspiration or incompetent at informing. But in others, the choice appears quite real, and the arguments on both sides quite strong. Students will often seem to prefer the charismatic teacher, who will tend to rationalize his use of charisma by emphasizing the importance of understanding as distinguished from knowing. But it is clear that emphasis on understanding, or inspiration, may serve as too ready an excuse for lack of mastery of the subject matter. Pedants, on the other hand, will justify their dullness as academic responsibility, when in fact it may owe more to their neglect of method, their lack of concern with teaching as an exchange.

There are, it seems to me, three things to be said on this subject: First, a successful teacher, just as he requires an unusual degree of self-consciousness if he is to be honest, requires also a touch of arrogance. In any but the most routine courses--and, ideally, no courses are routine--part of what he is saying to his students is, "Watch me and listen to me, for I am a scholar, and you must come to think as I do. You need not agree with what I think, but you should be alert to how I think for I think differently from you, and the difference is what scholarship and science are about." In other words, we do, quite clearly, have some responsibility to communicate to our students a thought process, in order that they be able to approach data outside the classroom as we at our best do. This suggests that part of the teacher's job is to think out loud, an activity most convincing when it is unprogramed. To play with an idea, or a set of data--to approach, back off, tease, inspect, tenderly and zestfully--is to show the student what systematic thinking is all about, and to share the creative experience with him. But it does take a bit of arrogance, which must be watched, lest it grow, and the course come to deal exclusively with what goes on in the professor's head. There are few professors whose heads merit such sustained attention.

Second: If the first commandment is to "know thyself," the second is to "know thy students." It is obvious that a judicious mixture of inspiration and information is what we ought to be after, but no standard mixture will do across the country, or even across the classroom. The motivations of our students differ markedly, and hence the appropriate pedagogic vehicles differ as well. This suggests that some effort must be made to reach students individually, admittedly an instruction of little utility to those who face, each morning, not congenial classes but faceless hordes. But even in the crowd, some faces can be identified, and diversity in instructional pattern sought.

Third: The general bias these days seems to be in favor of emphasizing motivation, which usually means de-emphasizing information. A growing body of evidence, arising largly out of experience with teaching of the disadvantaged, suggests, however, that the most effective way of motivating students is to provide them with new skills. People, apparently, enjoy doing things they can do. And that means that what we are after is teaching people how to do social science. We do not, after all, possess so systematic a body of accumulated knowledge as we should like; moreover, even what we do know is likely best learned by engaging our students in the activity of discovery itself. And this, in turn, requires a combination of creative intuition and technical skill which makes the question of choice between inspiration and information, in the end, largely meaningless.

III

Political scientists face a peculiar professional hazard, encountered usually at some point in our careers as graduate students when we first attempt to explain to our parents what political science is. The explanation is almost always embarrassing, for at its end, our parents either express surprise that anyone would pay us for engaging in so unprepossessing an activity, or strongly suggest that their own political wisdom is in no way inferior to ours. Since everyone is his own political scientist, so authorized by the democratic ethic, we rarely elicit the deference to which we should like to believe we are entitled by our investment. Yet deference is clearly among the more important perquisites which thereunto pertain. In order, therefore, to avoid the embarrassing problem of differentiating our wisdom from that of the lay citizen, we may engage in various defensive behaviors. The most serious of these, and the one most likely to interfere with our teaching, is a reaction formation in which the disarmingly simple is made tortuously complex. Arcane methods are devised, and a set of elaborate symbols is invented, which will insure that the initiate into political science will be properly impressed. It is important to bear in mind that the activities of scholars frequently have as their latent function fulfillment of social and psychological ends, sometimes at the expense of serious scholarship. This is not to suggest that political science represents the displacement of private motives onto scholarly objects, but that the danger of such displacement is a special hazard to which we ought to be alert. Nor is it to suggest that the development of sophisticated and complex techniques or languages is to be dogmatically eschewed, but rather that the acceptance of complexity should be judged, always, according to the canons of scholarship.

IV

I do not know that there are any significant trends in the teaching of political science today, if by "significant" we imply widespread adoption. Laboratories of one sort or another are evidently becoming more popular, as are courses about political analysis (as distinguished from political substance). Since there is rarely any systematic research or evaluation of innovations in college teaching, there is little evidence that our students are "better," for all the innovation. Moreover, and more important, there is little consensus in the discipline as to how "better" might be measured. The central pedagogic problem we face is our total inability to define professional competence authoritatively. This problem goes far beyond disputes among the several major school of political science. It is solved neither by retreat to the generally accepted "great books" nor by frantic pursuit of very specialized skills, which provide the opportunity for psychic gratification regardless of their relevance to our work.

The lack of reasonable criteria by which professional competence might be measured probably derives from the hyperbolic scope of the discipline. If man is a political animal, then nothing human is alien to political science, which may be exciting, but doesn't help in deciding on the appropriate content for a course in scope and methods.

Yet there is little excuse for despair. Even though ambiguity is our fate, we may still strive for greater certainty course by course. It is likely that most teachers do not ask, when planning a course, what, precisely, they expect their students to know, or to be able to do, when they finish the course that they did not know, or were unable to do, before taking it. It is only when we convert the existential ambiguity of the discipline into an operational code in our daily teaching that the problem becomes unmanageable.

More explicit concern with course objectives will also serve to encourage more systematic innovation in teaching, for instead of the vague dissatisfaction which now prompts periodic change in course content or style, regular review becomes a natural adjunct to preparation. The result, at its best, is to institutionalize innovation, making change with grace rather than sporadically.

V

There are any number of additional problems which face the teacher, be he neophyte or veteran. These range from exercising some control over the massive inputs of alleged information with which publishers and others flood our desks to responding in educationally fruitful ways to the political ferment among our students. (In both these cases, it is difficult to know what is wheat and what is chaff.) The list includes as well the tension between research and teaching, and the tension between consulting and research. It is easy to be diverted, and it is rewarding, as well, and it is even, from time to time, professionally meaningful. But in the end, effectiveness as a teacher requires self-consciousness as a teacher. Such self-consciousness is these days regarded, in many quarters, as a bit maudlin, and one does not lightly wear heart on sleeve. In the end, therefore, if teaching is to thrive, the ethic itself must change, permitting and even encouraging faculty members to talk with each other about what they do in the classroom. As political scientists, we also presumably know something about how to try. It is easier not to try, for he who does not try cannot fail. But teaching was never supposed to be easy.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Somit, Albert, and Joseph Tanenhaus, American Political Science. New York; Atherton Press, 1964.

TEACHING THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

by Henry Cord Meyer[*]

> Crammed tight with knowledge still to be digested,
> Quick-triggered with some quite impressive quotes,
> Completely competent, they say, and tested
> In use of bibliography and notes,
> He joins a large department, at the bottom,
> Not yet in campus politics entwined.
> And teaches, with the turn of leaves in autumn,
> The courses those promoted left behind.
> To freshman, row on row and greenly glistening,
> He tenders information as he's hired to,
> And they, in turn, between their yawns are listening,
> For one persuasive reason: they're required to.
>
> Richard Armour[†]

These lines from an observant poet of academia convey considerable wisdom about the predicament of the college teacher newly arrived in his profession. For a historian the words conjure up a bustling scene of masses of students in "Western Civilization" or in another replay (in the student's educational sequence) of the growth of the American Republic. The hints about institutional attitudes and the quality of the curriculum are almost too characteristic to be amusing. The one optimistic aspect of the situation is that, since Richard Armour wrote these lines in 1964, the picture has begun to change dramatically.

INNOVATIONS: BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

Innovations are appearing in various aspects of history study and in the intellectual attitudes of historians. Choices in graduate history studies are becoming more varied and flexible. Historians are giving serious attention to training for college and university teaching, including classroom experience combined with consultation and evaluation. Recently trained historians are participating in departmental discussions on curriculum innovation. New attitudes toward the intellectual dimensions of history study reflect a growing interest in interdisciplinary approaches. Historians are evaluating their role in and relationship to the larger community outside the college or university. The passive or inflexible scholar-teacher is being stimulated to reconsider thoroughly the most basic assumptions about his profession.

[†] Armour, Richard. "Young Instructor" in Going Around in Academic Circles. ©1965. Used with permission of McGraw-Hill Book Company.

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Most obvious are the changes deriving from student discontent of recent years. The new history teacher must recognize one basic fact: the better students of this generation are no longer willing to sit through four undergraduate years of straight lectures and examinations. They are restive about mass-enrollment introductory courses for freshmen and sophomores. They are seeking closer individual relations with teachers and more intimate knowledge of subject matter, even though they may not fully utilize the opportunities. An alert teacher tries to respond with a combination of interest for student proposals and continuing concern for academic standards and achievement.

Student activism is not a new phenomenon on the American campus. The later 1930's saw much involvement with the anti-Fascist cause in the Western world, which flared up in sympathies for the Spanish Loyalists and often bitter struggles between student moderates and extremists for the control of student government and activities. But the professional university establishment was never seriously challenged, no matter how much individual students or teachers devoted themselves to the causes. Today's situation is different and perplexing because it calls upon the teacher to respond to the quickly shifting focus of student involvements, yet at the same time to understand and define the role and significance of the teacher in their enduring intellectual context.

The better students are seeking an active relationship between their learning and their new goals. They want clearer motivation and justification than just passing examinations and making grades. They want to see a connection--perhaps a too obvious connection--between their studies and their passionate concern for humanism or integrity, for social justice or a search for academic power. Historians may lag behind the other social scientists in meeting these demands for relevance, and they sometimes complain that students will not think "historically." But an alert imaginative teacher can restructure his subject matter (particularly through topical approaches or other variations of teaching format), devote increased attention to individual interests, and aid the student in gaining historical insight. Perhaps "History" will record that one of the beneficial changes wrought by this era of student unrest was to restore the role of the learner and teacher to their rightful centrality in the American university.

THE EFFECTIVE TEACHER

Let us not deceive ourselves; the accomplishment of effective teaching is not like winning a popularity contest. True, some teachers have charisma of a kind that attracts numbers of students to their offerings; but the quiet and unspectacular influence of others is just as meaningful to students in the long run. The young new teacher always has the great advantage of generational empathy. Only as he grows older does he realize that intellectual vigor must gradually fill in the widening distance between generations. "Good teaching" involves much more than offering relevant facts on some subject of current passionate concern or currying favor and notoriety by being "revolutionary" along with the current crop of extremists. The effective teacher is the one who gets to students because they respect the fairness and rigor of his standards, appreciate the relevance and importance of his subject matter, and are motivated by the integrity and importance of his thinking.

Today's historian realizes that he is both a humanist and a social scientist. By style or interest he may strongly prefer the one emphasis to the other, but he recognizes that both modes of thought illuminate his way. Historians have long wrestled with conflicting facts or interpretations. Now they understand that no single mode of inquiry is the only acceptable intellectual one, and that no particular structuring of sources or search for insight is mandatory. The enduring concern of the humanist is still evident: to take the long view in observing men and events; to clarify in narrative the subtle interplay of continuity and change; to recognize the differences and the uniqueness of people, their ways and their arts. The historians must show students the relationship of these humanistic values to the urgencies of modern social change and the need to devise technologically effective methods of coping with great quantities of historical data.

Where and how will the student and the historian make the most effective contact? A historian can vividly and sensitively re-create the life and spirit of a personality or an era--that would be history as an art. He can view aspects or personalities of the past in relation to, or comparison with, dilemmas and interests of the present--such an approach suggests that one might learn from history. Finally, the historian can introduce students to his own immediate world of inquiry and research and thus stimulate their participation in the excitement of the intellectual adventure. Few teachers will be equally effective in each of these ways, but at least one of these dimensions should be developed by the new historian in the university or college.

CHANGES IN PRESENTATION

The young teaching historian is usually given major responsibilities in survey or other introductory courses. Fresh from intensive and professionally oriented graduate studies, he may suffer real shock in adjusting to the needs of beginning students and devising methods of dealing effectively with them. The misdeeds of secondary history teachers who are really athletic coaches are legendary. Much less often recognized, but even more serious, are the sins of university--certified historians who drive their freshmen captive audiences to distraction because they do not convey the significance of the subject they teach. Pity the student crammed with details about the Treaty of Westphalia or the events of the American Civil War but with no further clues to the importance of historical study! Even the beginning course must convey a sense of process in the venture, must open the student's mind to Clio's intellectual discipline. When the freshman begins to understand how a historian thinks and works--and why--then, and not before, he begins to learn something about history.

This conclusion suggests that historians teaching undergraduates may be in trouble if they continue to offer only broad coverage of subject matter by the traditional lecture-examination format. They should learn to develop skill in selectivity of evidence that still conveys a basic sense of historical movement and does not violate fundamental perspective and verity. Historians should try to involve even beginning students in a combination of approaches to selected and interrelated subject matter: Hearing about, reading, writing and discussing history. Such selectivity and use of multiple approaches demand much more planning than preparing a set of lectures does and are more time-consuming in execution and evaluation. But they can make the difference between just another course and a significant intellectual experience for student and teacher alike.

Once the historian is willing to accept broader flexibility in selection of subject matter and variations in methods of approaching it, a whole new pattern of courses of intellectual experiences becomes possible for his students. Traditionally, undergraduate European history has been taught by broad periods (either era or century) or by national segments (in turn subdivided by chronological period). Various thematic approaches have also emerged--the diplomatic, intellectual, economic, social, and the like. Courses in the American area have had similar characteristics, possibly with excessive fragmentation by period. Now university and college catalogs are beginning to list attractive offerings in refreshing diversity.

The year course in Western Civilization, the great innovation of the 1920's, one which was once generally required, if often fragmenting or giving way to other alternatives. In some institutions it now extends over 2 years, and students may choose a minimum number of segments. Some institutions have developed 2-year or 3-year interdisciplinary courses with a humanistic emphasis. Many historians who are distressed by the inevitable superficiality of the broad survey select characteristic periods, aspects, or personalities for emphasis. Whatever the controversy about it, the broad overview still retains its significance, drawing wisdom from the continuity of human experience. Indeed, some teachers are asking: must it necessarily be in Western civilizations? Cannot freshmen derive similar intellectual training and experience from introductory courses in Slavic, East Asian, or Latin American civilization?

Similar changes are occurring in the American field, though more slowly. The sentiment still prevails that students should have yet another year of an essentially chronological and political survey as their first university course in American history, even though most have had 2 years of national history in the last 4 or 5 years of their precollege schooling. Some institutions, however, are already offering a year of American intellectual history or American civilization (interdisciplinary humanistic emphasis) as an alternative for particularly qualified students.

In addition, a variety of brief courses or experimental study groups in various fields of history are appearing for freshmen or sophmores. So far they are often restricted to special kinds of students or used as bait for future history majors. The mass of American students, however, is still serviced in the unreconstructed history survey. These specialized introductory offerings will, however, bear careful watching; they may lead to significant innovations for general beginning students in future years.

The undergraduate history major, with its emphasis on work in the junior and senior years, has many variations. At one end of the academic spectrum, some institutions just require a minimum number of hours or courses in any grouping of history offerings; at the other end, there are structured programs that begin with a special introductory course and culminate in a pro-seminar or senior essay emphasizing method and presentation. It is here, at the advanced course level, that more opportunities for innovation in subject and teaching are appearing. Among interesting examples are the following:

1. A number of institutions offer discussion groups in connection with advanced lecture courses; the professor in charge or experienced teaching assistants who meet the groups emphasize historical process and resolution of problems.

2. Studies in historiography are moving into the heart of essentials for the history major. Often a professor lectures on a series of examples from the "greats," from Herodotus to Hofstadter. Some instructors urge students to chose historians of particular interest and build the course on successive student presentations. One experimental approach is to take a relatively limited topic such as "Individual and Society in World War I" or "Constitutional Development in America, 1783-89," and to present different ways in which historians have dealt with the topic--from studies with humanistic insight to works using quantitative techniques. In such courses the subject matter is especially related to intellectual discipline and historical method.

3. Topical approaches are becoming popular with students and faculty. They permit the teacher to illuminate a subject or group of subjects in considerable depth and the student to see how much the historian's craft depends on painstaking work with factual detail. This category also suggests that a professor can offer a course in the subject of his current research and writing. Scientists have for years involved undergraduates in their individual or group research. Why should not a historian open the "laboratory" of his own creative activity to possible assistance from students and learning on their part? Is there a better way to demonstrate

that teaching and research are opposite sides of the same intellectual coin? Needless to say, it will take incisiveness and extra work on the professor's part to follow such a course successfully, but the effort has potentialities of great vitality.

4. Current student discontent has raised issues about the relevancy of offerings and student participation in initiating courses. Perhaps some students confuse relevancy with contemporaneity. The university historian is not about to offer courses in current events; but in a flexible, discipline-oriented curriculum he can respond to student interest by devising courses of solid historical substance that are relevant to fundamental issues of the times. Real service can be done, for instance, with a course in black history that also underlines the essentials of the historian's intellectual responsibility. Indeed, that emphasis alone sets such a course apart from one pandering to activist pressures or simple propaganda.

Here is another alternative. A new catalog listing might read:

History 192. Experimental Group Study. 4 units.

Open to three or more students who agree as a group on a particular topic or theme of study and arrange with a professor of their choice for academic consultation (1-2 hours weekly). By prior arrangement at time of enrollment; work to be planned for the entire subsequent term.

As with individual study, students have the initiative, while the professor consents or not, as his other commitments indicate. Judicious participation by the instructor will give students maximum responsibility for developing course content, leaving the evaluating of it in experienced hands. A department should cumulatively count such work in a professor's load just as it does with individual study.

These examples--and there are certainly others--indicate the possibilities for innovative teaching. The major problem for the young teacher is to get the opportunity to work with new approaches. In many institutions it may not be easy. Some innovations can be accepted more readily than others. Institutionalized curriculums are difficult to alter and other faculty members respond defensively if their interests or roles seem to be threatened by change. But if the young teacher can resist the immediate gratification of a confrontation and seek the assistance and support of his colleagues, the effect may be very much worth a try and may constitute a preeminent experience in bringing about successful change.

Interdisciplinary courses offer attractive opportunities for stimulating work with students. At their best they permit the historian to illuminate a period or a sequence of problems with insight derived from several humanistic or social science disciplines. Such combinations can provide greater interest and stimulate students to respond with originality. The key to success or significance lies either in the breadth of knowledge of the individual professor, or in an effective combination and scheduling of several talented individuals. Anyone can devise a course that pours out facts about art, literature, philosophy, economics, and sociology. The pertinent questions are: Has this diversified approach more effectively illuminated a historical era or problem? Have the modes of thought, inquiry, or creativity of the artist, writer, philosopher, economist, or social thinker extended the dimensions of understanding beyond what the historian customarily provides? Effective interdisciplinary teaching is even more demanding than single-subject pedagogy. Some students will see the great interconnection themselves, but many will require extra dedicated effort by the teacher if the real interdisciplinary impact is to be made. Here, even more than in any single subject, the vitality and the insight of the teacher is crucially important.

Professor Boulding has already discussed the gap in communication between universities and their surrounding communities and the importance of seeking to close it. In introductory courses historians sometimes encounter students still mentally and psychologically bedded in simplified conclusions of folk history or the strictures of religious teaching. Achieving intellectual maturity has always meant repudiation of simplistic patterns, political prejudices, and unverifiable religious literalism. Some teachers have always relished the use of shock techniques in liberating their students from such ignorance. The more historians deal with aspects of social behavior, however, the more difficult their relations with the community become. In all the civilized world since Rousseau's time, history has been used in public schools to foster patriotism. Increasingly conflict has occurred in which professors have criticized the limitations of school history teaching and aroused suspicion and hostility by the character of their own inquiry. In recent decades some historians have argued that schools would best use history to stimulate thinking and to realize fully the opportunities in democracy that this nation professes. One result has been irritation of the most sensitive and primitive nerves of ignorance and prejudice underneath the civilized skin of the American body social politic. Shock and confrontation will not necessarily produce public wisdom and inaugurate change for the better. The university teacher-historian should seriously consider what contributions he can make to increase effective communication between his guild and the broader community. His ridicule of suburbanites, damnation of conservatives, and activism for instant social reform may be less effective than his involvement in community concerns that identify him in a broader context of his ideas.

THE ULTIMATE RESULT

No one can say how far the influence of an effective teacher will reach. There is documented evidence of very learned men who have inspired their students. Many also are the unsung teachers who are not necessarily the producers of major original knowledge, yet without whose work and influence the lives of many students would have been poorer. A brilliant mind alone does not of itself produce a fine teacher. To the quality of mind must be added an ingredient of spirit and a dimension of personality. The trained historian with a lively enthusiasm for what he studies, who senses its importance for its time and his own, and who wants to encourage others to learn about it has the essential makings of an effective teacher. That is why the good teacher of history should offer more than just some segment of the facts of the past. He should, in addition, conceptualize or select out what was important, give it meaning in relation to contemporary issues of intellectual or community concern, and generate the response of students who had no interest for his subject before their paths crossed. Such a combination can produce the ultimate result: to give the student an experience with a man, a mind, and a scholar at work.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Portions of the following books will be of interest to young Historian-teachers:

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Carpenter, P., History Teaching: The Era Approach, Cambridge, 1964

Elton, G. R., The Practise of History, New York, 1967

Gustavson, Carl G., A Preface to History, New York 1955

Hughes, H. Stuart, History as Art and Science, New York, 1964

Roucek, Joseph S., The Teaching of History, New York 1967

Smith, Page, The Historian and History, New York 1964

Shafer, Boyd C., et al, Historical Study in the West ..., New York, 1968

Ward, Paul L., A Style of History for Beginners, Washington, D. C., 1959

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Bailey, Jackson H., "Non-Western Studies in the Small Liberal Arts College...," Liberal Education, Vol. 47 (1961), 405-11

Cohen, Maurice, "Toward a Basic Undergraduate Course in World Civilization," Liberal Education, Vol. 51 (1965), 209-20

Finkelstein, Joseph, "Freshman History: The Neglected Course," Liberal Education, Vol 46 (1960), 267-72

Geiger, Louis S., "Recruiting History Faculty--the Liberal Arts College," Liberal Education, Vol. 54 (1968), 294-99

Keeney, Barnaby C., "The Dilemmas of Relevance and Commitment," Liberal Education, Vol 52 (1966), 27-33

Means, Richard L., "Research vs. Teaching: Is there a Genuine Conflict?" Liberal Education, Vol 54 (1968), 238-44

Paige, Glen D., "The Professor and Politics," AAUP Bulletin, Vol 52 (1966), 52-56

Perkins, Dexter, "We Shall Gladly Teach," American Historical Review, Vol. 62 (1956-57), 291-309

Shafer, Boyd C., "The Study of History in the United States," AAUP Bulletin, Vol. 50 (1964), 232-40

THE TEACHING OF PSYCHOLOGY

by Robert B. MacLeod[*]

This chapter might be subtitled "Questions addressed to a beginning teacher of psychology." And if it were, my first word of advice would be: be coolly skeptical about questions raised by a member of the older generation and especially about his answers. The beginning teacher should begin by thinking for himself; if he does not, he may find it difficult at a later date to assert his independence. This generation of students is calling for a thoughtful reappraisal of the whole meaning of higher education. In spite of occasional excesses, it is a healthy movement. To the young teacher, who is still close to his own student experience, it should be a challenge to do a bit of radical thinking, not only about the formal organization of higher education but also about its implicit philosophy. There may, it is true, be some residual wisdom in our tradition, but it should not be accepted without careful examination.

Actually, I am not worried about the young teacher's being too radical; I am worried about his being too conservative. There is little in the graduate training of prospective college teachers that invites a fresh approach to higher education. The following questions are directed to the teacher of psychology, but they might be directed to the teacher of any subject.

(1) What is your purpose in teaching psychology?

(2) What kind of psychology are you teaching?

(3) To whom are you teaching it?

(4) How are you teaching it?

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(5) How are you preparing yourself to teach it?

Most of these questions are raised by Kenneth Boulding and Stanford Ericksen. Here they are pointed especially toward the introductory course in psychology. My own biases will be clear, and these can be readily discounted.

Historical Note

Psychology in one form or other has been in the curriculum since the beginning of the American college. Until the latter part of the 19th century it was taught by philosophers as a discipline ancillary to metaphysics, epistemology, logic and ethics. For philosophical psychology at its best, read William James' Principles of Psychology (1890) probably the best single book on psychology ever written in English. James examines the classic problems of psychology as problems to be solved through careful observation and clear thinking, using the methods of the sciences where these are relevant, but never hesitating to challenge the assumptions both of the sciences and of traditional philosophy, and never disparaging thepractical problems of everyday living.

The influence of James was tremendous. Generations of students revered him and studied his textbook, but the pattern of subsequent psychology was dictated by anti-philosophical movements. The first was the "new psychology" of the laboratory, heralded by Wilhelm Wundt. It was based on the method of analytic introspection and attempted to correlate elementary states and processes of consciousness with antecedent and concomitant physical and physiological conditions. Around the turn of the century there was a steady trickle of German trained psychologists, the most notable of whom was E. B. Titchener, dedicated to the thesis that psychology could be established as an independent experimental science. Laboratories were founded in the leading universities, psychology demanded and achieved its independence from philosophy, and a standard psychological curriculum began to be recognized. The beginning teacher of psychology will find a classic model in Titchener's Textbook of Psychology.

The second movement was represented by a wave of biologically oriented psychologists, who were impatient with introspective analysis and wanted to establish psychology as an objective science of behavior. The prime mover was probably C. Lloyd Morgan, the Welsh biologist, but in this country the great pioneer was E. L. Thorndike and the most vocal expositor was John B. Watson. The movement, loosely known as "behaviorism" but more properly designated as "stimulus-response (S-R) psychology" seems to have won the battle against analytic introspectionism. The language of stimulus-response lends itself readily to the conception of man as an adjusting organism. Actually both movements have much in common. Together they represent the ideal of psychology as one of the natural sciences, and they provide the core of the 'basic psychology' which is found in virtually every curriculum in the country.

The pioneers soon began to discover that their psychology could not be contained indefinitely within the confines of the laboratory. The problems of society, particularly in the fields of education, industry, and medicine, insistently demanded that psychological principles and methods be practically applied. The requirements of two world wars dramatized these needs, first for the development of psychological tests and second for the development of clinical procedures. There consequently came into being, particularly after World War II, a significant and well-organized profession of psychology, which in turn demanded that the teachers in the colleges should train their students for professional practice. The demand for professional preparation itself opened up for scientific investigation areas of human behavior which had not been explored by the traditional experimentalists.

In recent years the field of psychology has been extended still further from man as an adjusting organism to man as a member of society, and psychologists have been finding new and stimulating colleagues among anthropologists, sociologists, economists, political scientists, and even historians.

Thus we see that psychology, without having discarded its classic problems, has been reaching out into a multitude of fields, each of which involves a broadening of its subject matter and often requires a revision of its methods. One might conclude psychology is now in a state of chaos. Certainly its "public image" has become quite blurred; one man's conception of psychology may be almost wholly different from that of someone else. Whether or not psychologists can find a simple definition of their subject that is not so comprehensive as to be meaningless, the beginning teacher of psychology must realize that he will be addressing students with widely divergent conceptions of what it is they are going to be studying.

The teacher might, at one extreme, choose to be an eclectic and give a little bit about all possible topics that are considered to be psychological; at the other extreme he might decide to give his own interpretation of psychology and discard everything else as irrelevant. Both extreme approaches are probably wrong; the teacher must find some sort of middle ground. Whatever his final compromise, the teacher owes it both to himself and to his students to be fully aware of what he is doing. A merely eclectic approach without evaluation provides little stimulation; indoctrination without consideration of alternatives is equally bad. The good teacher will make his own biases explicit, but before he can do this he must become aware of them.

Hence the following questions. Every one of these involves every other, but there may be some value in asking them separately.

What is your purpose in teaching psychology?

Let us discard as irrelevant and unworthy such answers to the question as these:

> "I am trying to earn a living; I like the comfort and freedom of the academic world, and to achieve this sort of life I must do a minimum of teaching."
>
> "I want to become a dean or a president, and teaching is the first step on the ladder."

Some other answers, which at first glance seem to be a little more reasonable, should be examined critically:

> "I am a junior member of the department of psychology; I want to build the enrollment in our courses, to enlist more majors, to send more students to good graduate schools."
>
> "Since our best students go on to graduate school, I am preparing them to do well on the Graduate Record Examination and to meet the other graduate school requirements."

Such answers as these are also unworthy.

As a teacher of psychology, you are a member of the faculty of an institution which is dedicated to the education of the next generation. You believe thatyour subject can make an important contribution to the education of students, but your final criterion is the education of the student, not the welfare of your particular department or specialty. This means that as a teacher of psychology you must think of yourself first as a member of a larger team of teachers, all of whom are concerned primarily with the education of students. This means that you must think through for yourself a philosophy of education, and in the context of this philosophy you must assess the educational values of the psychology you are teaching.

What kind of psychology are you teaching?

One answer to that question might be: A vast amount of information labeled psychology is regularly published in books and periodicals. Such information is part of our culture, and my duty as a teacher is to make the next generation acquainted with it."

There is something to be said for this approach, and certainly it is supported by the most popular of the contemporary textbooks. The survey course which must be constantly revised to be up-to-date has a noble history. In the days of Chicago's A. J. Carlson it set a pattern of scholarship for teachers throughout the country. At its best it has provided excitng glimpses of science and scholarship at the frontier. At its worst--and the worst is probably to be found in the social sciences--it has served merely to differentiate between what is "in" and what is "old hat." For psychology this approach can be self-destructive. The literature of contemporary psychology is stuffed with commentaries, speculations, and reports of investigations which will not survive for even a decade. These must, of course, be combed by an expert for residual facts and insight, but to require of the student a "knowledge of acquaintance" with the trivia of contemporary psychological writing is not only to waste the student's time but to hamper his education.

My view--and it may be registered as a prejudice--is that any psychology worth teaching is a psychology centered on problems which have persisted since the beginning of recorded history, problems connected with man's conception of himself and of his relation to the world about him. Ultimately these are problems of philosophy, but psychology's contribution has been to bring them within the range of empirical inquiry. They can become real for the student of today. Seldom in human history has a generation of young people been more eager to grapple with the fundamental problems of human existence. The current catchword is "relevance;" students clamor for courses that are relevant. But relevant to what? The challenge to the teacher of psychology is to capitalize on the student concern for relevance, to begin with the problems that for him are most insistent, to share his concern, and then to lead him toward the recognition of even more fundamental problems. The philosopher's task, presumably, is to help the student to think more clearly. The psychologist can do this too; but his special responsibility is to lead the student to the point at which he will almost automatically say: "Here is a problem for research. We need facts. What facts? How are we to collect them? How are we to test them? How are we to interpret them?" The challenge to the teacher of psychology is to demonstrate that human problems can be solved, or at least clarified, if they are investigated with the attitude and the skills of the scientist.

To whom are you teaching psychology?

The first point to make in identifying your students is that you arenot teaching psychology just to future teachers of psychology. There will undoubtedly be a good many of these in your classes, butthe majority of your students will be young men and women who are not thinking of psychology as a career, whose primary interest is in another subject-matter field, whose professional goals are possibly in law, medicine or industry, or who are taking a course in psychology simply because the subject sounds interesting. You should have something of value to say to all young human beings to whom the world is open, exciting, challenging. The best of your students will honestly want to find out how a psychologist deals scientifically with human problems. Most of them will not be worried about requirements for admission to graduate school. They will put you as a psychologist "on the spot," and if you cannot demonstrate the relevance of psychology to the clarification of basic human problems you will fail as a teacher. With the possible exception of some advanced, pre-professional courses, all undergraduate instruction in psychology should probably be directed toward the nonprofessional student.

How are you to teach it?

The methods to be used in the teaching of psychology are in principle no different from the methods required by any other subject. Many questions of teaching method are ably discussed by Stanford Ericksen (see Volume IV). There is no point in restating his argument. The beginning teacher must, however, be prepared to try out a variety of methods and to select those which he can use most capably in meeting the requirements of the subject and the characteristics of his students. There is no fixed formula. Teaching is an exercise in communication, and successful communication depends on a multitude of factors which the teacher must identify and control. Many of these are rooted in the psychology of motivation, learning, attitude formation, and the like, and every good teacher is in a practical sense a good psychologist.

For the teacher of psychology a few points might be stressed: (1) As a psychologist, he ought to have a special advantage. He is a student of human behavior, and if there are any solid principles in behavioral science he ought to be able to apply them effectively. Teaching is an exercise in applied psychology, and the psychologist who fails does so either because he does not know his subject or because he has not grasped the relation between psychological principles and teaching practices. In both cases he is not only a bad teacher but also a bad psychologist. (2) As a psychologist he is an experimental scientist, and as such he will regard every course he teaches, indeed every lecture, every demonstration, every classroom discussion, and every examination, as an experiment in which he is clearly aware of objectives, hypotheses, controlled and uncontrolled variables, procedures, reliability of observations, and validity of conclusions. This may sound like a cold-blooded approach to teaching, but even a warm-hearted teacher can be intelligently aware of what he is doing. (3) As a scientist he is concerned with evaluation, and as a psychologist he knows a good deal about the methods of evaluating outcomes as related to objectives. The psychologist will be constantly alert to the need for new and better methods of evaluation.

The teacher of psychology is thus presented with a very special challenge, namely, to make his teaching a living demonstration of the practical applicability of his subject. This would seem to suggest that the psychologist ought to be the best teacher on the faculty. He seldom is, for the obvious reason, as the psychologist knows, that skill in teaching requires more than mere mastery of subject matter and technique. The greatest of teachers have skills in communication which they have not acquired through the study of psychology; and the young psychologist might do well to observe such teachers in action.

How should you prepare yourself to teach psychology?

The first and obvious answer to a question on preparation is that you must know your subject, but this becomes less obvious as teachers and psychologists ask themselves what their subject really is. If psychology is simply what is presented as psychology in the textbooks and the periodicals, its mastery is a big but still a finite task. In some other fields a simple subject-matter definition may be possible, although it is doubtful. For psychology, however, the subject-matter cannot be neatly circumscribed. Psychology's central problem, the understanding of man, leads out into virtually every field of human life. James took it for granted that the psycholotist whould be well grounded in philosophy, but for him an acquaintance with physiology and neurology was equally important. Today psychologists would have to add such natural science fields as genetics, ethology, and possibly biochemistry, plus the supporting mathematical skills;

and they would also have to add anthropology, sociology, and other social sciences. Back in the late 19th century Dilthey argued thatthe proper approach to the understanding of man is through history; and in recent years the humanistic movement in psychology has come to life again, with its emphasis on literature and the arts as sources of psychological insight. It would seem that to teach psychology properly one would have to have colossal scholarship.

And this is exactly what is suggested here: the psychologist should be the most broadly educated man on the faculty. An ideal that is probably unattainable, but one that defines a direction. If the beginning teacher has had standard graduate training, he will face his first teaching job with confidence in his mastery of a rather narrowly defined subject. He is faced with these alternatives, with the possibility of several compromises: (1) he may recede into a still more narrowly defined field of specialization and reject everything else as "not in my field;" or, (2) he may actively broaden his interests, play with new problems, open his mind to the challenges to psychology presented by other disciplines. Of the two, I obviously favor the second; but a compromise ought to be possible.

The compromise I favor is by no means impracticable. The psychologist as a scientist is actively inquiring. As a teacher he is presenting his subject as an on going operation, and he is inviting his students to share in an adventure of discovery. It would be a sham if he were not himself an active inquirer. This does not necessarily mean that he is constantly grinding out research papers, but it does mean that he is personally involved in the quest for psychological understanding. This may take the form of a research project, but there are lots of other ways in which the psychologist can be creative--through the projects of his students, through community enterprises, and the like. The important thing is that for him psychology should be not just "a subject to be taught" but an active inquiry in which his students can become engaged. He will be a poor teacher if he is not himself "engaged;" and he man turn out to be a great teacher if, in spite of stumbling methods, he succeeds in sharing his "engagement" with his students.

At the same time, the psychologist, as a member of the community, is expected to have wise comments about everything that has to do with human behavior. The standard reaction is to disclaim any competence outside "my own field." This say some psychologists is wrong. You as a psychologist are fact-minded. You have learned how to take a complex problem and translate it into a set of questions for research. Even if your specialty is color discrimination, or proactive inhibition, or the functions of the subcortical centers, your skill in the analysis of problems will make a contribution to the community involvement. When the president of the parent teacher association asks you to assess the effect of violence on television, or when your colleague in philosophy asks you about the basis of the esthetic judgment, or when the local mayor shares his concern about dissident elements, you will find that, even if you have no ready solutions, your conception of the task of psychology will be broadened. You, as a psychologist, will gain from every association with the larger community. You will gain if you reach out to meet the challenge; you will lose if you retreat into your shell.

The answers are difficult

These questions are all easy to ask, but quite difficult to answer. I have not tried to conceal my own biases, and it is unlikely anyone will be in complete agreement. It is essential, however, that every beginning teacher answer these and similar questions for himself. Granted that some teachers may be able to perform brilliantly without a plan and without a philosophy, yet the fact remains that most are ordinary persons who need to think things through in advance. Conclusions will vary, but the beginner will be well on the road to becoming a good teacher if: (1) he is in love with his subject; (2) he has respect for his students; (3) he is openminded about method, willing to challenge tradition and to experiment with new procedures; and (4) he regards his subject as a meaningful part of a larger educational enterprise.

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Addendum

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